

Europe District provides Support for Others in Central and Eastern Europe

By Marnah Woken
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From environmental surveys in Poland and Hungary — to quality of life assessments in the Czech Republic — Europe District is developing Support for Others (SFO) opportunities for the Corps through its Regional Outreach Office.

Through the SFO program, Europe District works closely with the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) in supporting the National Security Strategy of Peacetime Engagement and Enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe.

“There is a huge need for engineering expertise and support in these areas,” said Dr. Judith Reid, Acting Chief of the Regional Outreach Office.

“We’re filling that need through Support for Others — a very new and unique program that’s all about sharing information, working together, and building relationships with other countries. It’s also about preventive defense, and moving from a reactive to a proactive state. We’re planting seeds and helping other countries become part of the engineering and environmental planning process — we’re helping them make smart choices.”

Speaking at a ribbon cutting ceremony which opened the District’s Regional Outreach Office, Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Joe N. Ballard said, “It is extremely important for us to assist EUCOM in creating peace in these developing environments.”

Europe District recently joined North Atlantic Division (NAD) as part of a strategic initiative by the Chief, to align for success by further developing the EUCOM relationship.

NAD Commander Maj. Gen. Jerry Sinn now oversees all Corps of Engineers activities in the EUCOM area of responsibility.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help others throughout the world,” said Sinn. “We have unique engineering expertise in designing and building projects that enhance the quality of life for military personnel and American citizens. It is a logical extension to bring our skills to those in Eastern Europe who would benefit from an improved infrastructure.”

Sinn added, “I get a great deal of professional



These apartment buildings were built in the Ukraine for retired officers of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces. (Photo by Europe District)

satisfaction hearing the words ‘thank you’ from people who benefit from the work we do to improve their living conditions.”

Projects under Europe District’s SFO program include construction in the Ukraine in support of the Defense Special Weapons Agency, embassy renovations in many former Soviet Republics, a South-East Balkans environmental security assessment, a Central European petroleum stock study, an assessment of a training range in the Ukraine, as well as assistance to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic under the Partnership for Peace program as they prepare to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

“Probably one of the most exciting programs we’re working on is our role in Partnership for Peace,” said Reid. “We’re conducting infrastructure inventories on military installations in the three NATO select countries to determine how well they meet NATO interoperability standards. We’re also helping them by offering assistance in strengthening their overall engineering capabilities.”

The quality of life assessment in the Czech Republic and environmental surveys in Poland and Hungary also fall under the District’s work with Partnership for Peace. The assessment involves the development of a total housing management plan, and a cost of living database of housing areas surrounding military installations in the Czech Republic.

“Poland and Hungary have expressed interest in environmental surveys to improve their living conditions and quality of life,” said Reid. “With this project, we want to provide training on how to conduct Environmental Survey Reports so they have the knowledge and expertise to conduct the surveys themselves. This is a great way to build relations and improve living conditions at the same time.”

A site assessment of a training range in the Ukraine is also part of Europe District’s SFO work. Mechanical Engineer Ragan Glandon and Project Manager Paul Ramey from Europe District went to the Ukraine to determine if the area could support a joint U.S./Ukraine training exercise.

“The 7th Army Training Command (ATC) showed interest in using a former Soviet training range in Yavoriv,” said Ramey. “We looked at force protection and life support systems — assessing the water supply, sewer and electrical systems, barracks, and dining facilities.”

Under the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, Europe District worked with the Defense Special Weapons Agency (DSWA) in the construction of approximately 600 new apartments in Khmelnytsky, Ukraine.

The project was a collaborative effort between the DSWA, the Corps, the Ukraine Ministry of Defense, and private industry. Europe District managed construction of the apartments which were designed for the families of former Soviet officers.

Also through the SFO program, Europe District has assisted the Corps’ Transatlantic Programs Center with humanitarian aid to Africa. EUCOM and the U.S. Embassy in Mauritania, Africa, recently asked the Corps of Engineers to provide a public health engineering assessment of Nouakchott, Mauritania — a severely impoverished city.

Europe District Environmental Engineers Peter Russin and Pat Brady conducted a two-week study and site-analysis of the area, and identified three major life and safety health problems. The main problems found in the assessment were a lack of clean drinking water, poor sewage handling, and the lack of a waste disposal program.

“The city’s annual August to September rainy season floods the El Mina Quarter of Nouakchott, causing standing water to mix with raw sewage,” said Russin. “This standing water contaminates the limited drinking water in the area, resulting in cholera and malaria outbreaks.”

“Following our assessment, we provided an outline in terms of an initial cleanup of the area,” said

Brady. “We also provided guidance on the development of a solid waste management plan.”

Both Russin and Brady feel their assessment in Mauritania, and the subsequent cleanup efforts of the area may serve as a pilot program for other impoverished African cities.

“Europe District is aggressively serving as EUCOM’s “Door to the Corps” in the region,” said District Commander Col. Mike Barry. “Both EUCOM and our Partnership for Peace partners are enthusiastic about the Corps’ capabilities to support a full range of engineering and environmental services in support of the region’s developing democracies.

“Using the strong foundation the District has built in supporting U.S. Forces in Europe, we are reaching out to support U.S. regional objectives as part of the EUCOM team,” added Barry.

“Prosperity, stability, politics, religion and geography vastly differ in these countries,” said Reid. “All of these things are taken into consideration when we work on these projects so it’s a learning process for us too. Europe District has a lot of energetic people who really enjoy this type of work, despite the different challenges that come with it. They enjoy sharing their expertise and enjoy seeing the fruits of their labor — that holds a lot of meaning for them.”

“Support for Others is helping us learn how to live together,” added Reid. “It’s helping us share with other countries and learn about different cultures — engineering can do that.”